DOCUMENT RESUME

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Intensive Reading Instructional Teams, Hartford, Connecticut. It Works.

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Inner-city Hartford, Connecticut, children reading below grade level but having potential for growth in reading were given a 10-week comprehensive program of reading instruction conducted by three Intensive Reading Instructional Teams (IRIT's). Groups of 15 pupils attended the half-day sessions, moving from teacher to teacher at 1-hour intervals and receiving instruction in three areas: (1) phonics and word attack skills, (2) basal reading program, stressing vocabulary and comprehension, and (3) individualized reading. Part of the children's work included writing stories and poems. These, along with teacher-made exercises, have been collected into booklet form by the Hartford Schools for use by other teachers. In the 3 years of the program, children from grades 3 to 6 have been included. The 1967-68 group contained 500 children, mostly from grades 4 and 5. Pretesting and post-testing, using various forms of the California Reading Achievement Test, showed significant gains in vocabulary, comprehension, and total reading achievement. Studies of measured intelligence, using Lorge-Thorndike Intelligence Tests, showed no significant gains. Followup studies, 7 months into the school year following IRIT, showed that reading scores were being maintained or improved upon in a regular classroom setting. References are included. (MD)

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TITLE I

INTENSIVE READING INSTRUCTIONAL TEAMS

Hartford, Connecticut

IT WORKS

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   Intensive Reading Instructional Teams, Hartford, Connecticut OE–37038
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INTENSIVE READING INSTRUCTIONAL TEAMS
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

One of a Series of

Successful Compensatory Education Programs

U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare
Robert H. Finch, Secretary

Office of Education
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FOREWORD

This project report is part of an independent study of selected exemplary programs for the education of disadvantaged children completed by the American Institutes for Research in the Behavioral Sciences, Palo Alto, Calif., under contract with the U.S. Office of Education.

The researchers report this project significantly improved the educational attainment of the disadvantaged children involved. Other communities, in reviewing the educational needs of the disadvantaged youngsters they serve, may wish to use this project as a model - adapting it to their specific requirements and resources.

Division of Compensatory Education
Bureau of Elementary and Secondary
Education

INTENSIVE READING INSTRUCTIONAL TEAMS OF HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

Introduction

Three Intensive Reading Instructional Teams (IRIT's) provided a comprehensive half-day program of reading instruction for a period of approximately 10 weeks. Groups of approximately 15 pupils move from teacher to teacher at 1-hour intervals, with each teacher specializing in one of three instructional areas: 1) phonics and word-attack skills; 2) basal reading program, stressing vocabulary and comprehension; and 3) individualized reading (literature and library orientation). Pupils returned to the sending schools in the afternoon to receive instruction in other basic subjects from their regular teachers.

Pupils referred for IRIT enrollment came from inner-city schools qualifying for Federal and State aid. They were placed in the IRIT program during specified periods allocated to each of the participating schools. Over the 3 years of the program, the levels of the pupils have ranged between grades three and six; however, during the 1967-68 school year the program was aimed primarily at pupils in the fourth and fifth grades. Pupils who were reading below grade level but nevertheless had the potential for growth in an intensive reading program and the ability to work successfully within a group were eligible for enrollment in the IRIT.

The IRIT program has been underway since the 1965-66 school year. Nearly 500 children were enrolled in the program during the 1967-68 school year. The structure of IRIT was based on a study of the daily, morning reading improvement program conducted by the Hartford Public Schools during the summers of 1962-65. This study indicated that reading improvement could be obtained in a relatively short period by the use of a number of innovations, including: a departmentalized structure with children moving from teacher to teacher in 1-hour intervals; a teacher specializing in each of three areas: basal reading program, phonics, and individualized reading; motivational and multi-media techniques; reading materials not contained in the regular classrooms; pupil-teacher conferences to motivate and individualize each child's reading program; and close contact with parents to assess the effects of the IRIT on the child in his own home.

The primary results of the IRIT program have been measured in terms of pre- and posttesting, using various forms of the California Reading Achievement Test. Significant gains were noted in the

areas of vocabulary, comprehension, and total reading achievement. Limited studies were also made of the changes in measured intelligence and the extent to which the reading gains carry over into the following school year. Data from the Lorge-Thorndike Intelligence Tests given to 71 children in fourth through sixth grades indicated no significant gains following 10 weeks of IRIT instruction. A follow-up study indicated that, after 7 months into the school year following IRIT, reading scores were being maintained or improved upon in a regular classroom setting.

Personnel

A. Project Director. (Full-time.)

The project director was responsible for the IRIT, as well as for two other reading improvement sub-projects. As assistant to the district supervisor of reading, the project director had overall responsibility for planning, organizing, and promoting projects developed with state or federal funds involving reading and language arts services to disadvantaged children. Specific duties included assisting in staff recruiting and orientation, formulating evaluation procedures and preparing evaluation reports, requisitioning equipment and supplies, and serving as liaison between the project and the supervisor of reading, directors of instruction, and the principals.

B. Reading Specialists. (Three; one per team. Graduate work in diagnosis of reading influences, techniques in teaching or reading, and materials used for remedial reading.)

The reading specialists served as team leaders and coordinated the team activities. In addition, they served as teachers for one of the instructional segments.

C. Reading Teachers. (Six; two per team. Experienced classroom teachers with special strength in the area of reading.)

D. Clerk-typist Aide. (Three; one per team.)

The clerk-typist aides relieved the teacher from clerical duties, such as attendance records, communications with parents and the sending schools, correcting tests, preparing reports on students, and the mechanical preparation of instructional materials.

Methodology: General

The IRIT program employed a team approach to provide intensive small-group reading instruction. Pupils, in groups of about 15, moved from teacher to teacher at 1-hour intervals with each teacher specializing in one of three instructional areas:

Decoding Program - This area was organized to develop good word-analysis skills on the part of the student. A basic knowledge of speech sounds and the application of these sounds to word pronunciation was taught. This was followed by the development of a sequential program in word recognition which was coordinated with the other two areas.

Basal Reading Program - The purpose of the basal and developmental reading area was to provide instruction which would emphasize vocabulary improvement and comprehension development. Materials were used which stressed the skills of comprehension. Correlation of the child's previous basal reader with the IRIT program was emphasized.

Individualized Reading - The purpose of this area was to encourage the student to develop an interest and pleasure in reading. Each pupil was taught the reading skills as he needed them, and his comprehension was checked periodically. A portion of this reading period was devoted to pupil-teacher conferences and individual instruction.

The afternoons were free from teaching in order to allow time for: holding conferences and in-service programs with classroom teachers, planning each student's program cooperatively, preparing instructional materials, and investigating techniques and materials which could be used to make the teaching of reading to disadvantaged children more effective.

Methodology: Specific Examples

A variety of motivational techniques and materials were used in the IRIT program. Those reported as being particularly successful are described below:

A. An IRIT open house provided parents with an understanding of the program and emphasized the necessity for continued parent-teacher cooperation. During the 1967-68 school year the reading centers were visited by approximately 40 percent of the parents who had children enrolled in IRIT.

B. Motivational materials to build pupils' self-concept were emphasized. Today's Negroes (Hartford Public Schools, 1968), a booklet of biographies, was written by the pupils with team-directed activities to improve self-concept. Weekly newspapers and booklets of children's work were published to help build a positive self-image. Scholastic awards and certificates of participation were presented to the IRIT pupils.

C. A lending library of paperback books was established and used to promote wider reading. The library was a subtle technique for getting materials into the homes as a leisure activity and also for fostering self-reliance and appreciation of literature.

D. Individual learning packets were developed for use in the individual reading program in order to provide activities geared to pupils' needs.

E. Reading was correlated with home economics and industrial arts, and creative language booklets were written by the children. Up-to-date science content material was used for stimulation and enrichment of vocabularies.

F. Flee-zees (Fraser, 1967), a "Dr. Seuss" type workbook was prepared to help simplify the concept of homonyms and stimulate pupil interest. Pupils from one of the IRIT centers participated in the writing and illustrating of the original booklet.

G. Specific techniques for vocabulary development phrasing, and speech improvement were developed for use with the Bell and Howell Language Master. In an early survey of pupils, 93 percent reported this as the "best liked activity." Overhead projector games were also devised to stimulate interest in learning. Both team and pupil-produced transparencies have been used.

H. Improvement in oral expression was fostered through choral speaking, a puppet theatre, and the dramatization of both fables and scientific facts.

Evaluation

A. Measures of Achievement

The major results for each of the 3 years of the IRIT program are summarized in Table 1, in terms of mean scores on the California Reading Achievement Test. Each of the selected groups

ranging from 36 to 45 children, was administered Form W, 1957 edition, at the start of the instruction and Form X during the final week. Both forms of the California Reading Achievement Tests were composed of the two sub-tests, one in vocabulary and the other in comprehension. The scores of these two parts and a total score for the entire test were recorded separately.

Table 1

SUMMARY OF CALIFORNIA READING ACHIEVEMENT TEST GAINS DURING THREE YEARS OF IRIT[a]

Year	No. of Groups	Grade Range	No. of Pupils	Mean Grade Equivalent Scores: Vocabulary Start	Vocabulary End	Vocabulary Gain	Comprehension Start	Comprehension End	Comprehension Gain	Total Start	Total End	Total Gain
1965-66	9	3-5	372[b]	4.0	4.6	.6[b]	3.8	4.6	.8[c]	3.9	4.6	.7[c]
1966-67	9	4-6	341[d]	4.0	5.0	1.0	3.9	4.9	1.0	4.0	5.0	1.0
1967-68												
Grade 4	2	4	55	3.6	4.4	.8[e]	3.4	4.4	1.0	3.4	4.4	1.0
Grade 5	2	5	70	4.0	5.4	1.4[e]	3.8	5.3	1.5	3.9	5.4	1.5

[a] Table adapted from tables in the evaluation reports (Hartford Board of Education, 1966; Nearine, 1967, 1968) Form W (1957 Edition) administered at start of program; Form X administered during last week of instruction.

[b] Represents 98 percent of the total IRIT enrollment. All but one group significant at or beyond the .05 level.

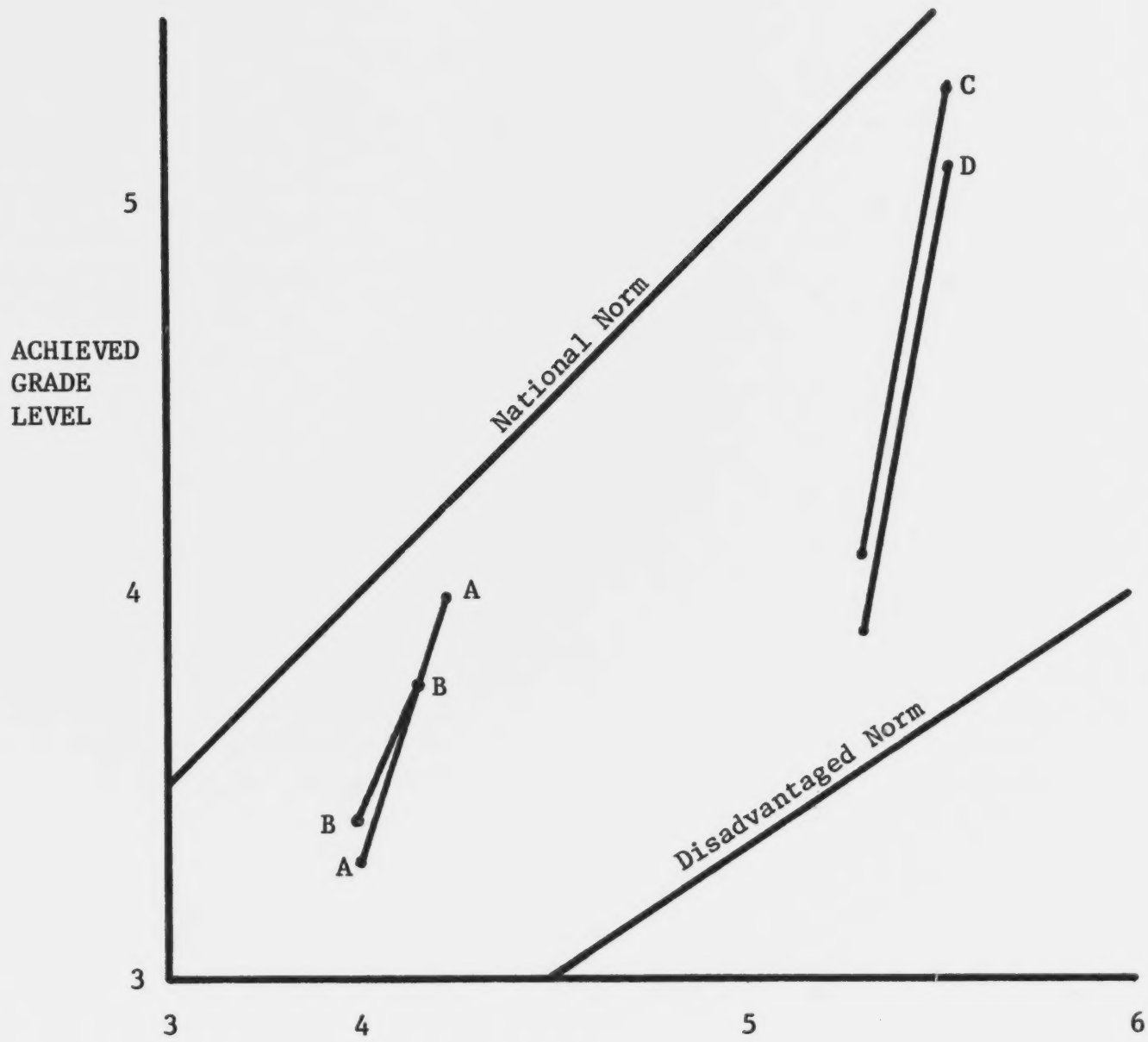
[c] Gains in all groups significant beyond the .002 level.

[d] Represents 73 percent of the total IRIT enrollment. No tests of significance calculated.

[e] All gains significant at or beyond the .05 level.

Diagram 1

REPRESENTATIVE GAINS IN READING AGE OF
SAMPLES OF PUPILS IN THE IRIT PROGRAM 1967-68



A Eleven boys at Emanuel IRIT, Fall 1967
C Twenty-four girls at Ann St. IRIT, Winter 1967-68
B Twenty-five girls at Emanuel IRIT, Fall 1967
D Twenty-one boys at Ann St. IRIT, Winter 1967-68

Actual measured gains in reading achievement were calculated from the difference in mean grade equivalent scores between the beginning and the end-of-cycle tests. Mean grade equivalents were computed for each of the sub-tests and for the total test score and were analyzed using a statistical test of mean difference at the .05 level of confidence.

As indicated in the table, in practically all of the groups tested, the reading gains during the experiment were significant at or beyond the .05 level. The practical significance of these gains is shown graphically in Diagram 1. It can be seen from this graph that the growth in reading skills during this brief 6-10 week period approximates one school year in terms of grade-equivalent scores, as compared with a predicted 6-7 week gain for disadvantaged pupils over a 10-week period.

During the 1965-66 school year a study was conducted of the relationship between length of IRIT cycle (ranging from 6 to 12 weeks) and measured gains in reading achievement.

Average weekly gains in vocabulary, comprehension, and the total reading score as measured by the California Reading Achievement Tests were computed. These gains were analyzed using a statistical test of mean difference at the .05 level of confidence.

The findings showed no significant difference in growth of vocabulary, comprehension, or total reading achievement based upon variations in IRIT cycle lengths; therefore, no optimum length of cycle can be suggested.

A study was also made of the effects of IRIT instruction on the intelligence of a sample of 71 children as measured by the non-verbal section of the Lorge-Thorndike Intelligence Test. No significant gains in non-verbal IQ were indicated following the weeks of IRIT instruction.

Finally, as a preliminary step to the determination of a shift in emphasis from intermediate grade levels to the primary levels, a group of 19 first-graders received IRIT instruction during the spring of 1968. The results showed that significant gains were made in word forms and word recognition; however, gains in letter recognition were minimal.

To determine the extent to which the gains from the IRIT carry over into the following school year, 92 children representing 24 percent of the total 1965-66 IRIT enrollment were retested in the spring of 1967 using Form Y of the California Reading Achievement Test. Mean grade equivalent scores were compared with the scores obtained at the end of the 1965-66 IRIT instructional period. As shown in Table 2 , students in one school showed no significant changes in scores over the 7-month period, while significant gains in vocabulary, comprehension, and total reading continued to be made by students in the second school. Students from the third school demonstrated gains in comprehension and total score but not in vocabulary.

Table 2

MEAN GRADE EQUIVALENT SCORES OF IRIT STUDENTS
FOLLOWING 7 MONTHS OF CLASSROOM PLACEMENT, SPRING, 1967

School	Measure	N	Mean G.E. End of IRIT	Mean G.E. Spring 1967	Change
A	Vocabulary	31	4.2	4.1	-.1
	Comprehension	31	4.2	4.1	-.1
	Total Reading	31	4.2	4.2	0
B	Vocabulary	35	3.8	4.6	.8*
	Comprehension	35	3.8	4.6	.8*
	Total Reading	35	3.8	4.7	.9*
C	Vocabulary	26	5.2	5.2	0
	Comprehension	26	5.3	5.9	.6*
	Total Reading	26	5.3	5.6	.3*

* Significant at the .05 level.

B. Other Evaluation Indices

In addition to the standardized tests, a number of surveys were conducted of parents whose children were in the IRIT, of classroom teachers, and of IRIT students. The vast majority of parents felt that their children had been helped by the IRIT both in reading and in their other classes, that they spent more time reading at home, and that they had enjoyed IRIT enrollment. Similarly, a large majority of classroom teachers surveyed during the 1966-67 and 1967-68 school years noted some improvement in reading skills, attitudes toward reading, and pupil attention span. A large majority of the 22 teachers responding to the 1967-68 survey also noted a positive effect upon classroom behavior; however, half of the 14 teachers responding to the 1966-67 survey reported no effect. Surveys of the students in the IRIT also indicated that a large majority felt they were helped in reading by the IRIT experience, that they liked the novelty of having three teachers and changing classes, and that they thought their parents were happy about their IRIT work.

Finally, the IRIT program served to provide assistance to classroom teachers in learning about new methods and techniques for teaching disadvantaged pupils.

C. Modifications and Suggestions

During the 3 years of IRIT operation, the basic essentials of the program have remained rather constant. The length of the instructional cycle has varied, however, between 6 and 12 weeks. The grade range of the pupils has also varied from grades three to six. For the 1967-68 school year, the major portion of the program was aimed at providing 9 to 10 weeks of instruction to pupils in grades four and five. A pilot project was also conducted during 1967-68, involving the application of the IRIT approach to first grade pupils.

Based upon the experience in this pilot program and the evidence from studies indicating the advisability of early detection and treatment of potential reading disabilities, the IRIT program will shift to first-grade pupils during the 1968-69 school year. As outlined in the project description for the 1968-69 (Hartford Public Schools, 1968):

a. Twenty-five to 30 first-grade pupils from the validated schools who give evidence of delayed readiness will be selected for the beginning reading language arts program. This will be based on kindergarten testing results and on teacher recommendation.

b. Pupils selected for the program will attend the IRIT the entire morning for approximately 12 to 14 weeks of instruction.

c. Pupils will return to their home school in the afternoon where they will receive instruction in other basic areas. Instruction in the center and in the sending school will be closely coordinated.

d. Each team will sub-divide the pupils into three groups who will receive instruction on a departmentalized basis in each of three areas - an enrichment area, a developmental reading instruction area, and a decoding, language arts area. Individualization of instruction will be an important goal of the program.

It is planned that the classroom teachers will be included as an integral part of the program and will work with the team in the coordination of the program. Also parent involvement will be emphasized and inservice programs for parents will be provided. Inservice programs for teachers on beginning reading instruction and pupil readiness will be continued.

Budget for 1966-67 school year

1	Project Director, Coordinator	Full-time
3	Reading Specialists	Full-time
6	Reading Teachers	Full-time
3	Clerk-typists	Full-time

Reading Materials, Supplies & Equipment	$6,000
Office Equipment	1,500
Office Supplies	2,100
Student Transportation	2,700
Telephones	411
Total operating costs during 1966-67 (does not include building rental, amortization of initial capital equipment, or miscellaneous supporting services such as art work and film processing).	$110,211

Approximate average per pupil costs for
10-week program $250

Inventory of Educational Equipment for One Reading Center:

1 Underwood Typewriter
1 Primer Electric Typewriter
2 Typewriter Tables
1 Thermo-Fax Copier
3 Overhead Projectors
1 Overhead Projector with Tach
2 Rolling Tables
1 Spirit Duplicating Machine with Table
1 File Cabinet - 4 drawer
4 File Cabinets - 2 drawer
16 Language Masters
3 Tape Recorders
2 Record Players
3 Filmstrip Projectors
1 Large Projection Screen
1 Small Projection Screen
7 Filmstrip Previewers
11 Junction Boxes
Language Master Cards - Phonics Series
Blank Card Sets
Word Learning Picture Series
Language Simulation Series
Keystone Slides - Dolch Basic Sight Vocabulary
Dolch Nouns
Dolch Phrase Sentence Series
Knipp Phraser Sentence Series
33 Headsets
1 Tape Splicer
15 Patch Cards
4 Extension Cords

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